The unmaking of a CM in waiting

The relentless and thorough investigations launched by Eenadu and Andhra Jyoti into the corrupt regimes of YSR and the laundering of money by his son Jagan, despite their attempts to gag the media houses, is worth lauding. C S H N MURTHY reports on the events leading to the recent court proceedings. Pix: The CBI raid at Reddy□s house

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The Supreme Court on 24th August refused to interfere with the Andhra Pradesh High Court's ruling ordering a CBI inquiry into Y S Jaganmohan Reddy's assets. Reddy who is a strong claimant for the state's chief ministership and is also a media baron owning *Sakshi* and *Indira* television channels of Andhra Pradesh is now facing the prospect of landing up in jail.

As the case has unfolded Jagan has not done himself any favours by making controversial statements and showering choicest abuse on former CMs Chandrababu Naidu of TDP, Rosaiah of Congress and rival media barons Ramoji Rao of *Eenadu–ETV* and Radhakrishna of *Andhra Jyothi-ABN.*

A few days ahead of the second death anniversary of his father, late YS Rajaeskhar Reddy, who died in an air crash on Sept 2, 2009 while serving his second term as CM, Jagan has to confront the task of keeping his political flock (about 29 MLAs and a couple of MPs) together and to respond to the CBI's interrogation.

The two media institutions responsible for putting Jagan in the dock are *Eenadu-ETV* and *ABN-Andhra Jyothi* who have been incessantly fighting against the corruption of the late Chief Minister and his son since the Congress returned to power in 2004. Despite YSR's efforts to gag the two media houses by openly spewing venom on them inside and outside the assembly, they exposed hundreds of corrupt deals that YSR had doled out to his kith and kin in the name of development.

YSR knew how to win the hearts of the masses and the corporate sector. With strategies (the word is used instead of 'schemes' as YSR brought most of them into play before elections) such as *Arogya Sree, Indira Swagruha, Rajeev Swagruha, Rajeev 104 & 108 Ambulance Services, Free power supply to farmers of 1 acre land holding* and *Fee reimbursement to all the EBCs,* YSR projected himself as a messiah of the poor and as a godfather to the corporate sector. All these schemes allowed free flow of cash from the state treasury to the corporate sector (hospitals and engineering/medical colleges), which is largely controlled by his own Reddy community. The favour he had shown to Gali Janardhana Reddy brothers (Ministers in the Yediyurappa's cabinet of Karnataka), with mining licenses and land allocations under special economic zones at throw away prices had been exposed by these two media houses even when he was alive. They had painstakingly exposed, with documentary evidence, how those who benefited from YSR's strategies had extended their generosity to his son Jagan to establish his companies after 2004.

It is in this backdrop that *Sakshi* newspaper and *Sakshi* as well as *Indira* channels had taken birth under the aegis of Jagati Publications. Jagan had also created a number of fake companies through which he laundered money to Jagati Publications via Mauritius. Evidence of this has been gathered by IT, State Vigilance and the CBI. The two media houses had also shown how APIIC (Andhra Pradesh Infrastructure and Industrial Corporation) profits were diverted to Jagati publications.

Despite this Jagan had stated before the electoral officer, Cuddaph, while contesting as an MP that his income for 2004 was Rs 10 lakh. The affidavit submitted by Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy to the Election Commission proved to be a tool in the hands of the Opposition. On Friday Jagan declared that he held movable and immovable assets worth Rs 365 crore, besides another Rs 41.33 crore in the name of his wife. He also declared that he did not own a vehicle. It is interesting to note that Jagan's properties rose to Rs 365 crore in 2011 from Rs 77 crore in 2009 and Rs 9.18 lakh in 2004.

Instead of replying to these charges Jagan and YSR began to label *Eenadu-ETV, ABN –Andhra Jyothi yellow media*. *Sakshi*'s singular agenda has been to attack *Eenadu-ETV, ABN-Andhra Jyothi* and N. Chandrababu Naidu.

As a corollary the Telugu Desam Party, headed by the Chandrababu Naidu brought out a book – *YSR-A Raja of Corruption.* The book was widely circulated both within the state and outside and a number of TDP MPs had submitted memoranda to the UPA–I leaders, including the PM, but no action was taken.

The petition against Jagan in the high court was a response to the diatribe he had launched against the Congress in the state and the UPA government. Some of the aggrieveg members of the Congress party such as V. Hanumantha Rao and Shankar Rao launched a counter offensive and the latter, who is now a minister in the cabinet of present CM, wrote to the AP High Court seeking an investigation into Jagan's corruption. The TDP, led by Yerran Naidu, has sought the permission of the High Court to implead into the petition.

Taking cognizance of the petitions the High Court directed the CBI to investigate the flow of investments into Jagan's companies. Jagan contested that political petitions are not maintainable under law and cannot be held against him. He further argued that these petitions are beyond the High Court's purview. Jagan said all his investments were legal but did not deny that the payments were made for favours shown under YSR.

These revelations have been possible only due to the tireless work done by *ETV-Eenadu* and *ABN-Andhra Jyothi*. In the meanwhile a requiem is being sung for *Sakshi* and *Indira* television which are soon going to be part of history.

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